

A  
REVIEW  
OF THE  
STATE  
OF THE  
BRITISH NATION.

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Saturday, March 5. 1709.

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THO' it is true, that the Quarrels between the African Company and the separate Traders are nothing at all, or of so Weight in the general Argument of preserving the Trade, nor at all concerned in the Question which now is before the Parliament, viz. Whether there shall be A COMPANY or no? And tho' I did not purpose to say one Word to the clamours of the said separate Traders and the present Company, as what I have no Concern in, and care not to meddle with— Yet I cannot let pass two Things, which I find run thro' the whole Argument, the separate Traders bring against the Company, and from whence they would argue, the Company not so fit to carry on the Trade as they, and their Forts and Castles of no Value.

I. Say they, the Company have sent out in the laſt 10 Years but ſo many Ships, and the ſeparate Traders ſo many; the Company have traded for but 20000 l. a Year, and the ſeparate Traders for ſome times upwards of 60000 l. per Annum.— And therefore these Gentlemen ſay, the Company are not ſo fit to preserve the Trade as the ſeparate Traders. But they are pleas'd to forget, that this is the very Thing the Company complains of, viz. That being daily discourag'd and ſupplanted by the Invasion of their Trade, by the Interloping of Clandefine Traders, they have been oblig'd to ſtand by, and ſee their Trade devour'd and destroy'd, and have there-

therefore done little, but just enough to keep their Affairs alive, waiting for better Times; whereas were they establish'd or settled in a New Company, as is propos'd, they are content to be oblig'd to export at least 10000 £. a Year, *Communibus Annis*, in Manufactures and Merchandizes from this Nation, which is more than any of those People could ever pretend to, and would effectually restore the Trade to the Nation.

2. They alledge, that the Company trade to but a very small Part of the Coast of Africk, where there Forts and Castles are plac'd, but that the Interlopers trade quite from Cape Blanco to Cape Negro above 3000 Miles. But it is necessary, those Gentlemen should speak this to those People, who do not know that Coast and the Trade there, or they should tell us, how many Negro Slaves they buy *sous le vent* of Angola, and whether ever any one Ship traded for Negroes, or Teeth, or Gold, for 2000 Miles of the 3000 they mention; perhaps they have gone a Shoar upon the Coast for Water or Wood, or to rob the Inhabitants, and sometimes have trepann'd the innocent Natives on Board, on Pretence of Trade, and carry'd them away into Slavery. But it is evident, the Company trades to all the principal Parts, where any Commerce is carry'd on; the Interlopers trade no where but where the Company-Ships frequently go, and can trade also, if it were worth while; but the Company have Forts and Castles in all the Places where it is worth while to trade, except Angola, where there is not so much Occasion, as has been noted.

If these then are the best Arguments to be us'd for the Interloping Trade, it seems to amount to very little, but rather argues for the better regulating a Company, and for the more effectual suppressing the destructive Methods of the separate Traders, by whom the Company's Trade has been reduc'd so low.

I must confess, I think the present Dispute about the Company and the separate Traders, and the long Time spent on either hand, but especially the Manner of it, to be the most trifling, and least to the Purpose, of any Thing I ever saw before that House in my Life.

Innumerable Witnesses are call'd, and long Harangues made to prove Mal-Treatment of one another, and threatening Speeches against one another. The Company's Tract...s, Servants I would say, are brought to discover the Instructions and Orders given them by the Company, when they were in their Service, and to produce Letters that order'd them to buy up Goods, so that the separate Traders should not get them; and such Stuff as this.

As to the Honour of Men, who having been entertain'd in a Service, think, when they are out of that Service, they are at Liberty to reveal all the Secrets, betray all the Trusts, and expose all the Measures committed to them by their former Masters; I shall not speak much here: It is to me a new-fashon'd Peice of Honesty, and they that can do so, and call themselves honest Men, I only say, I desire to be none of their Kin.

He that receives a Trust, it remains a Trust for ever, till he that committed that Trust to him discharge it. — He that has a Secret committed to him in a Time of Friendship, and reveals it in a Time of Enmity, or Anger, he never had any Friendship, and but very little Honesty; He that betrays his Master, tho' Dead, or exposes his Memory when he can no more reward him, tho' it be to escape a Pillory, or come out of Newgate, let his Reputation die the Death of a Traitor, and the World know how to thin him, as a Man of no Principles.

But after all these People have done, what vast Discovery did they make? — Who doubts but that the separate Traders have undermin'd the Company, and the Company the separate Traders? Who doubts but they have undermin'd, under sold, fore-stall'd, trick'd, and circumvented one another? Nay, if you say cheated one another, I won't dispute it. — And all this may just end in the old Song —

*Tar-ta-ra-ra, R-agrall, R-aggs all, I  
mean abroad, good People, for we are all  
honest as honest you know.*

And what does all this prove, but just what was said before, that this Contention between both has ruin'd and reduc'd the Trade. — The Company sit still, and just trade a little to keep themselves alive — The separate Traders trade a great deal, but run themselves out of Breath, and their vast Export declines; and what does all this end in? — But tell the Parliament, That if they do not take this Matter into their Hands, and establish it in such a Manner, as the Trade may be preserv'd, it will be wholly lost to the Nation.

And therefore an honourable Member, and a Person well known for his Judgment in the true Interest of Trade, seem'd, in my Opinion without Compliment, to say more in three Words, than the whole five Hours Examination amounted to; viz. That these Gentlemen spent a great Deal of Time to prove the Quarrels and Contentions of Factors and Agents on one side or the other, which no Body doubted was true enough — But it was expected, they would rather shew the Committee, as was promis'd, some Reasons to prove, that they were better able to carry on and preserve this Trade, than a Company.

This indeed was to the Purpose, and is the Sum of the whole Matter — The Conduct of either Party for the Time past, is of little Consideration, now 'tis plain, between them the Trade is lost, and the Trade must not be lost; if ye have thus pull'd one another to pieces, the Parliament must pull you all to pieces, and that seems the only Way to make you whole again.

And what need is there for the Hours to be taken up at the House of Commons about the Malversations on either hand? They are no Court of Judicature to right the wrong done on either hand; that both have injur'd, that you have done your best on either side to ruin one another, may be true, and no Body could expect anything else, even from your respective Constitutions — But what is this to the Case? It is not THE COMPANY, but A COMPANY, that is the Question — It is not who

has traded most or least, but who can trade best, when settled; and now we wait for our Schemes of such a Company as can best preserv'e this Trade; and indeed it will be a strange Thing when produc'd, unless they can answer the main Question, what Security they can give to the Nation for the preserving the Trade.

To call an exclusive Company a Monopoly, to say they shall put a Price upon West India Goods, and shall command the Trade of our Colonies, are plausible Things; but pray, Gentlemen, are there no Answers to these specious Arguments?

Will a Company be a Monopoly, when all the separate Traders may come into it, and all else that please, and you may all subscribe? — When as much Money and as many Traders as please may come in, Where then is the Monopoly?

As to the Security of the Trade by a Company, May they not be oblig'd by Charter to an Annual Export of Manufactures, and when once exported, whether shall they carry it; is not obliging them to so Export, a sufficient Security, that the Colonies shall be supply'd with Servants?

Again, as to imposing upon the Colonies — Cannot they have a Parliament Price put upon the Company, more than which they shall not demand, whether in Peace or War? — It is true, you cannot oblige them to carry a certain Number of Negroes, because you cannot oblige the Colony to take more than they may want — But there may be Conditions made; that upon the Complaint of the Merchants of any Colony for Want of Slaves, and contracting with the Governor on Behalf of the Company to take them, when they arrive; the Company shall be oblig'd to deliver the Number demanded, Danger of the Seas excepted, within a certain Time.

A thousand Ways may be taken with an exclusive Company, all which tend to secure the Trade, because built upon this, that they may be oblig'd to Trade — But where every Man is at Liberty to trade or not to trade, as his Profit invites, or his Loss deters, no possible Security, as I see, can be propos'd for the Preservation of the Trade, since without a sufficient Charge upon the Trade